

World majors urge Bush to reconsider Kyoto accord

Rome July 17 (Reuters) - The mayors of nearly 40 of the world's coastal cities, led by the mayor of Venice, sent a letter to U.S. President George W. Bush on Tuesday urging him to reconsider his rejection of the Kyoto global warming pact.

"As mayors, we would like to underline the dangers that our local communities, all located in delicate coastal areas, are facing due to global climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions," said the letter, a copy of which was sent to Reuters.

"Our cities will be heavily affected not only by the raising of the sea level but also by the probable intensification of extreme climatic conditions," it said, pointing to Venice and its famous lagoon as a prime example.

The letter was written by Venice Mayor Paolo Costa and undersigned by 37 others, including those of The Hague, Fukuoka in Japan, Rio de Janeiro, Seattle, London, Buenos Aires and Genoa in Italy, where G8 leaders meet this week.

Environment ministers are currently meeting in Bonn, Germany, to try and salvage the 1997 Kyoto Protocol that committed nations to cutting their emissions of greenhouse gases, which are thought to contribute to global warming.

The United States, the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases, rejected the accord saying it was "fatally flawed", unfair to U.S. interests and did not do enough to commit developing nations such as China to emissions cuts.

The mayors said U.S. backing was vital for Kyoto's success.

"We need to feel that we are part of a global plan which cannot pretend to be successful without the essential role of your country.

"This is why we feel that we have to express our deepest concern about the position that your administration has recently assumed towards the Kyoto Protocol... We urge you to reconsider your position," the letter said.

Environmental issues, including Kyoto, are expected to be raised during the meeting of heads of state from the G8 leading industrialised nations in Genoa, which starts on Friday.